Driven to Resistance

A History of the Revolutionary War, as told by those who lived it

Volume One

Compiled by R. A. Sheats

"We cannot look upon our fellow-subjects in America
in any other light than that of freemen *driven to resistance*
by acts of oppression and violence."

— Statement of the minority in Parliament, October 26th, 1775

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Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Holy Scriptures. All divine pronouns have been capitalized.

Give ear, O my people, to my law;
Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.
I will open my mouth in a parable:
I will utter dark sayings of old,
Which we have heard and known,
And our fathers have told us.

We will not hide them from their children,
Shewing to the generation to come
The praises of the LORD, and His strength,
And His wonderful works that He hath done.

For He established a testimony in Jacob,
And appointed a law in Israel,
Which He commanded our fathers,
that they should make them known to their children:

That the generation to come might know them,
even the children which should be born;
who should arise and declare them to their children:
That they might set their hope in God,
and not forget the works of God,
but keep His commandments.

— Psalm 78:1-7

"The truth is this: The march of Providence is so slow and our desires so impatient; the work of progress is so immense and our means of aiding it so feeble; the life of humanity is so long, that of the individual so brief, that we often see only the ebb of the advancing wave and are thus discouraged. It is history that teaches us to hope."

— Robert E. Lee

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A Note on the Texts

In compiling *Driven to Resistance,* it has been the author's endeavor to provide the modern reader with easily understood yet accurate texts of historical documents (letters, speeches, writings, etc.), in concert with a vision to achieve ease of readability while still preserving the integrity of the original documents. Due to the fact that much time has passed between the writing of these documents and the present day, however, a difficulty may be encountered by the modern reader in the comprehension of these texts because of their archaic language or grammar. For example, George Washington wrote a letter to his brother John Augustine, the original of which reads:

> *To Mr. Jno. Auge. Washington*
> *Dear Brother*
>
> Immediately upon our leavg the C at Geors. Crk the 14th Inst. (from whe I wrote to yo.) I was siezd wt violt Fevers & Pns in my hd wch cond wtout the lt Intermisn till the 23 follg when I was reliev'd by the Genls absolty ordering the Phyns to give me Doctr Jas Powder; one of the most excelt mede in the W.) for it gave me immee ease, and removed my Fevrs & othr Compts in 4 Days time.

The difficulty modern readers may experience as they attempt to read and comprehend such a letter is no doubt apparent. Because of this, certain methods of assisting the reader in the understanding of these historic writings have been adopted:

Spelling and Grammar

Though faithfulness to the original texts has been strictly maintained, it has been generally deemed prudent to conform spelling, capitalization, and punctuation to modern standards, though occasionally it has been thought best to preserve the original orthography for stylistic or other purposes. It has at times also been found necessary to add a word or phrase to assist in the comprehension of a particular passage. When this has been resorted to, added words have been set off from the original text by the use of brackets, thus allowing the reader to easily distinguish between the primary document and the compiler's additions.

If the reader wishes to obtain a copy of an original document in its true form (without modern spelling, punctuation, capitalization, etc.), recourse may be had to the primary sources themselves, as listed in the Appendix.

FOOTNOTING

Because of the strictness employed in adhering to the original phraseology and verbiage of the documents in *Driven to Resistance*, a concern was raised that a difficulty might be encountered by the modern reader in properly comprehending the meaning of a given document. This difficulty would arise from the fact that the English language has changed over time, thus causing much confusion and ambiguity in reading. It has therefore been determined to define archaic words and expressions by footnoting. Using dictionaries contemporaneously printed with the original documents themselves (such as *Webster's 1828 Dictionary of the English Language)*, as well as authoritative modern dictionaries, concise yet clear definitions have been added to assist in reading comprehension.

Lastly, please note that the texts employed in this volume are by no means a comprehensive collection of material from the time in question; these pages serve merely as a brief summary of a few of the events, experiences, thoughts, and writings of the day. For a more detailed study of American history throughout the years 1765-1775, please see *Works Cited* in the appendix as well as other primary documents of the time.

Part I

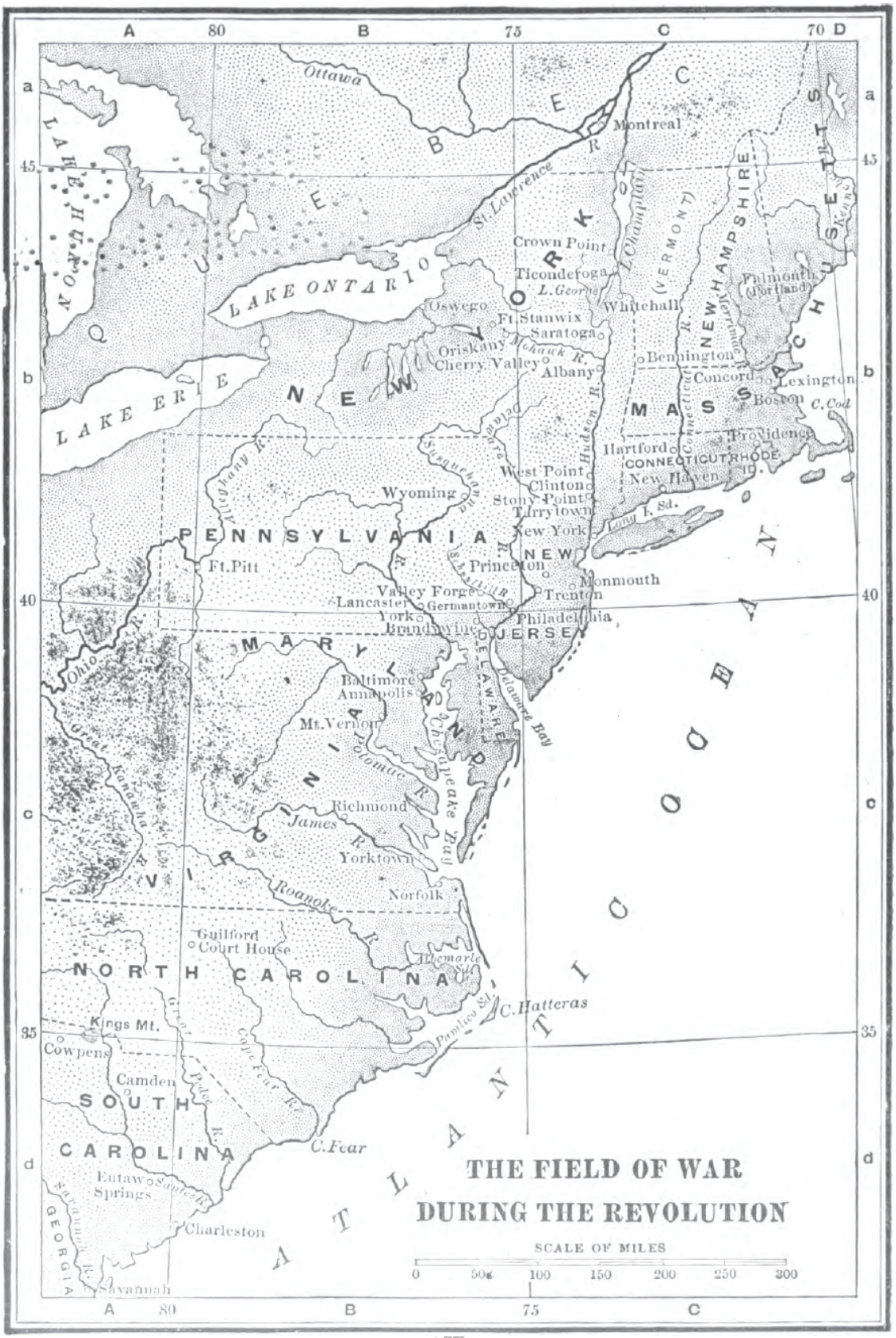
The Birth of the Conflict

The great design of our ancestors in leaving the kingdom of England
was to be freed from a subjection to its spiritual laws and courts,
and to worship God according to the dictates of their consciences. . . .
'to obtain for themselves and their posterity the liberty of worshipping God
in such manner as appeared to them most agreeable to the sacred Scriptures.'

— John Adams

I think the Parliament of Great Britain hath no more right
to put their hands into my pocket without my consent,
than I have to put my hands into yours for money.

— George Washington



CHAPTER ONE

The Stamp Act of 1765

The year was 1765. Only two short years separated Europe from the Treaty of Paris, the peace that signed the end of the Seven Years' War, a bloody struggle involving both the nations of Europe and the British colonies of America. Within this war Great Britain fought its enemies near at hand on the mainland of Europe, and also sent troops to America to defend her colonies in the struggles with the French and the Indians. At the end of the war, England emerged the victor as France ceded all claims to Canada and forsook the continent of America, leaving Britain with a vast new domain which needed protecting.

Following the peace concluding the French and Indian War, however, Great Britain found itself struggling under the overwhelming weight of a national debt of 148 million pounds. Parliament immediately commenced deliberations upon a method of reducing this sum. Lord North, the British prime minister, at length suggested the plan of raising a revenue from the American colonies. Contemporary David Ramsey writes, "It was urged that the late French and Indian war originated on account of the colonies—that it was reasonable, more especially as it had terminated in a manner so favorable to their interest, that they should contribute to the defraying[1] of the expenses it had occasioned."

Lord North

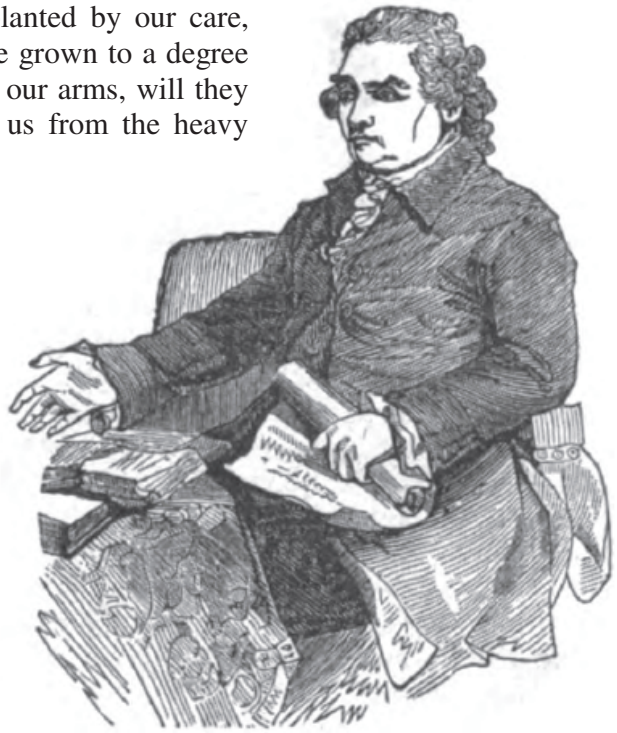
Both the American colonies and the British parliament agreed that British America should assist in paying the expenses of the nation, particularly those expenses which were incurred by Britain's increased land claims in America. However, opinions were divided on how this payment should be raised: Americans declared that their own representatives should determine the amount they should pay and how it was to be collected. Parliament, on the other hand, insisted that they possessed supreme authority over the entire British realm, and would dictate both how and how much the American colonies would be taxed to assist in covering the cost of the war.

[1] **defraying** — paying, discharging

Meeting in March of 1765, Parliament discussed the American situation. It was at length determined to tax the colonies in the form of stamps. These stamps (purchased from the British government) would be required to be placed on all public documents to make them legal: licenses, mortgages, deeds, etc. Even such things as newspapers and almanacs would be obliged to purchase stamps for each paper they sold.

Charles Townsend, a member of Parliament, in expressing his favor of this act, arose and spoke on what he deemed the justice and fairness of taxing the American colonies whom, as he declared, Britain had raised from infancy, and to whom the Americans must now pay due allegiance, exclaiming:

And now will these Americans, children planted by our care, nourished up by our indulgence, till they are grown to a degree of strength and opulence,[2] and protected by our arms, will they grudge to contribute their mite[3] to relieve us from the heavy weight of that burden which we lie under?



Colonel Barré

Townsend's speech was received with approbation by Parliament: was it not true that Britain had planted the colonies? Had not the 'Mother Country' cared for and protected their American subjects for centuries? And was not the Stamp Act a sensible and just method of permitting those colonies to express their gratitude and fealty to the arms which protected them? It appeared a compelling argument, but several members of Parliament rose to express their disapprobation of the act. After Townsend had spoken, Colonel Barré

[2] **opulence** – wealth, riches, affluence
[3] a reference to the poor widow, Mark 12:42

arose to address the assembly:

[Were the American colonies] planted by your care? No, your oppressions planted them in America! They fled from tyranny to a then uncultivated and inhospitable country, where they exposed themselves to almost all the hardships to which human nature is liable; and among others to the cruelty of a savage foe the most subtle, and I will take upon me to say, the most formidable of any people upon the face of God's earth; and yet, actuated by principles of true English liberty, they met all hardships with pleasure compared with those they suffered in their own country from the hands of those that should have been their friends.

[Were the colonies] nourished up by your indulgence? They grew by your neglect of them! As soon as you began to care about them, that care was exercised in sending persons to rule them in one department and another, who were perhaps the deputies of deputies to some members of this house, sent to spy out their liberties, to misrepresent their actions, and to prey upon them. Men, whose behavior on many occasions has caused the blood of those sons of liberty to recoil within them. Men promoted to the highest seats of justice, some who to my knowledge were glad (by going to a foreign country) to escape being brought to the bar of a court of justice in their own.

The Houses of Parliament

They protected by your arms? They have nobly taken up arms in your defense, have exerted a valor amidst their constant and laborious industry for the defense of a country whose frontier was drenched in blood, while its interior parts yielded all its little livings to your emolument.[4] And believe me, remember I this day told you so, that same spirit of freedom which actuated that people at first will accompany them still: but prudence forbids me to explain myself farther.

God knows, I do not at this time speak from any motives of party heat; what I deliver are the genuine sentiments of my heart. However superior to me in general knowledge and experience the respectable body of this house may be, yet I claim to know more of America than most of you, having seen and been conversant[5] in that country. The people I believe are as truly loyal as any subjects the King has, but a people jealous of their liberties, and who will vindicate them if ever they should be violated: but the subject is too delicate—I will say no more.

Despite the truth of Colonel Barré's words and the opposition it met with, the Stamp Act soon passed through Parliament and was signed into law on March 22, 1765. It would take effect in the colonies November 1st.

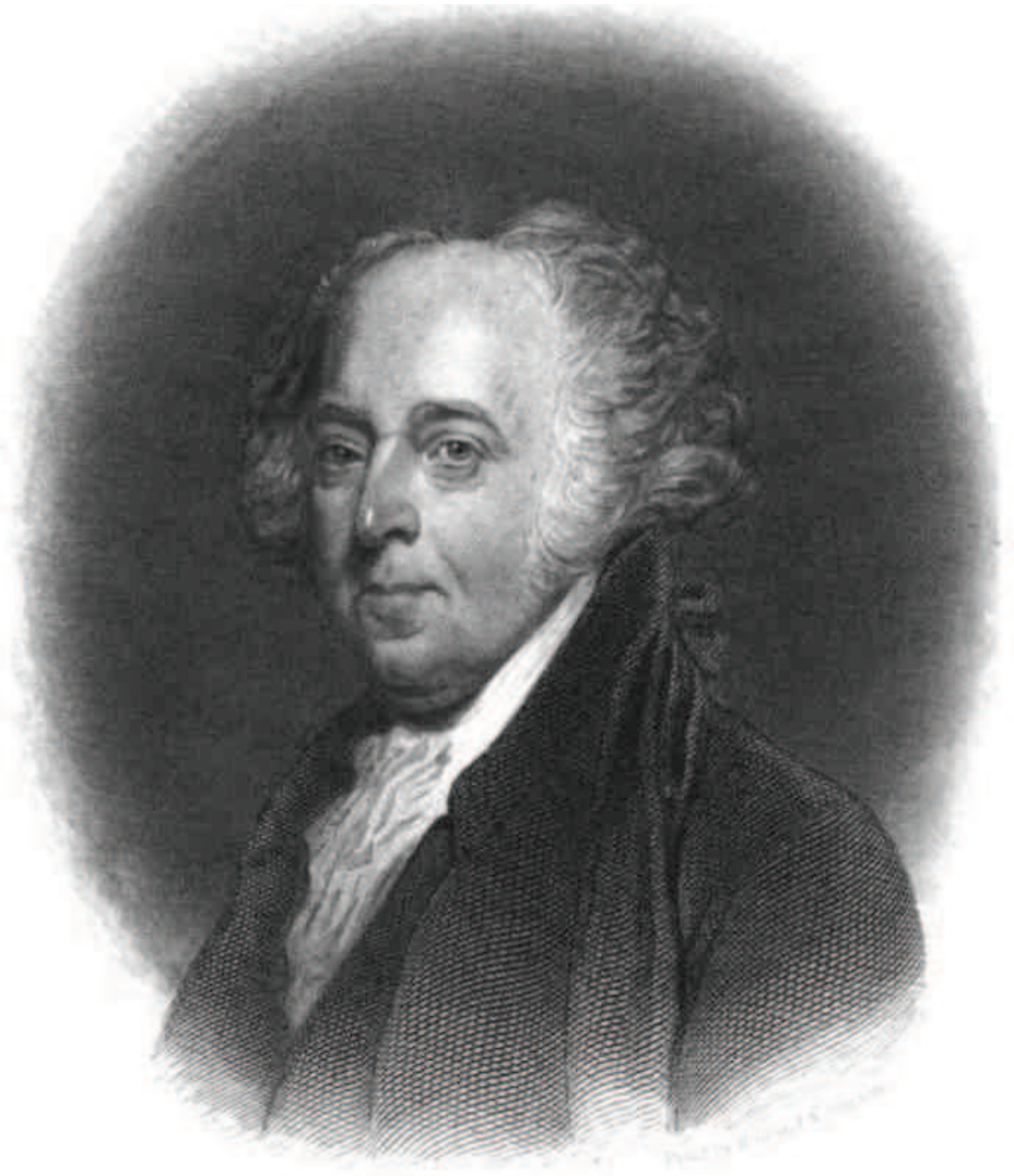
As news of this law permeated America, it was met with surprise and dread. It was feared (all too truly) that the enormous expenses that would be incurred by abiding by the Stamp Act would soon drive countless men out of business. Newspapers would cease to be published, printing presses would be forced to close their doors, and court cases would cease to be held as clients found themselves unable to afford the tax of stamps upon their legal paperwork.

A stamp

As the American continent shuddered with the astonishment and despair occasioned by the forthcoming law from Britain, leading men within the colonies arose to declare both the unjustness and unreasonableness of the Stamp Act. John Adams, a resident of the colony of Massachusetts, writing in the Boston Gazette, *explained to the people of Boston both the injustice of the late act of Parliament as well as the impossibility of the Americans abiding by it:*

We have called this [Stamp Act] a burdensome tax because the duties[6] are so numerous and so high, and the embarrassments[7] to business in this infant, sparsely-settled country so great, that it would be totally impossible for the people to subsist under it, if we had no controversy at all about the right and authority of imposing it.

[4] **emolument** – profit, advantage, gain
[5] **conversant** – familiar, acquainted
[6] **duties** – taxes, tolls, customs
[7] **embarrassments** – perplexities, confusions



John Adams

Considering the present scarcity of money, we have reason to think the execution of that act for a short space of time would drain the country of its cash, strip multitudes of all their property, and reduce them to absolute beggary. And what the consequence would be to the peace of the province from so sudden a shock and such a convulsive change in the whole course of our business and subsistence,[8] we tremble to consider.

We further apprehend this tax to be unconstitutional. We have always understood it to be a grand and fundamental principle of the constitution that no freeman should be subject to any tax to which he has not given his own consent, in person or by proxy.[9]

And the maxims of the law, as we have constantly received them, are to the same effect, that no freeman can be separated from his property but by his own act or fault. We take it clearly, therefore, to be inconsistent with the spirit of the common law, and of the essential fundamental principles of the British constitution, that we should be subject to any tax imposed by the British Parliament; because we are not represented in that assembly in any sense.

Reading the Stamp Act

[8] **subsistence** – means of supporting life
[9] **proxy** – a person who is appointed to act for another

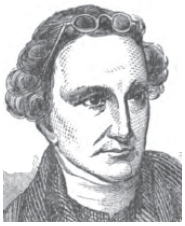
As Adams stated, British America had no representatives in Parliament, and it would therefore be unjust for Parliament to pass any law respecting the taxing of the Americans. According to British and common law, no taxes could be laid upon a people except by their own volition, as expressed by that of their representatives. To be taxed by a man whom the people had not appointed would be tyranny and an attack on the liberty of the colonists.

Throughout the year of 1765 John Adams and many like him wrote extensively, declaring the illegality of the Stamp Act and calling upon the populace and magistrates to request a repeal of the law from Parliament and to refuse to put the tax into execution within the colonies.

As Adams and others with him roused their nation to a due understanding of their rights and responsibilities, talk of the Stamp Act flew from house to house and from colony to colony. Throughout the year 1765 no topic engaged as much discussion or dispute. Both in casual conversation and public debates, the illegitimacy and consequences of the Act filled every mind and tongue.

In Virginia young Patrick Henry led the way in that colony as he set forth resolutions to be taken to counter parliament's illegal law. As he later recalled:

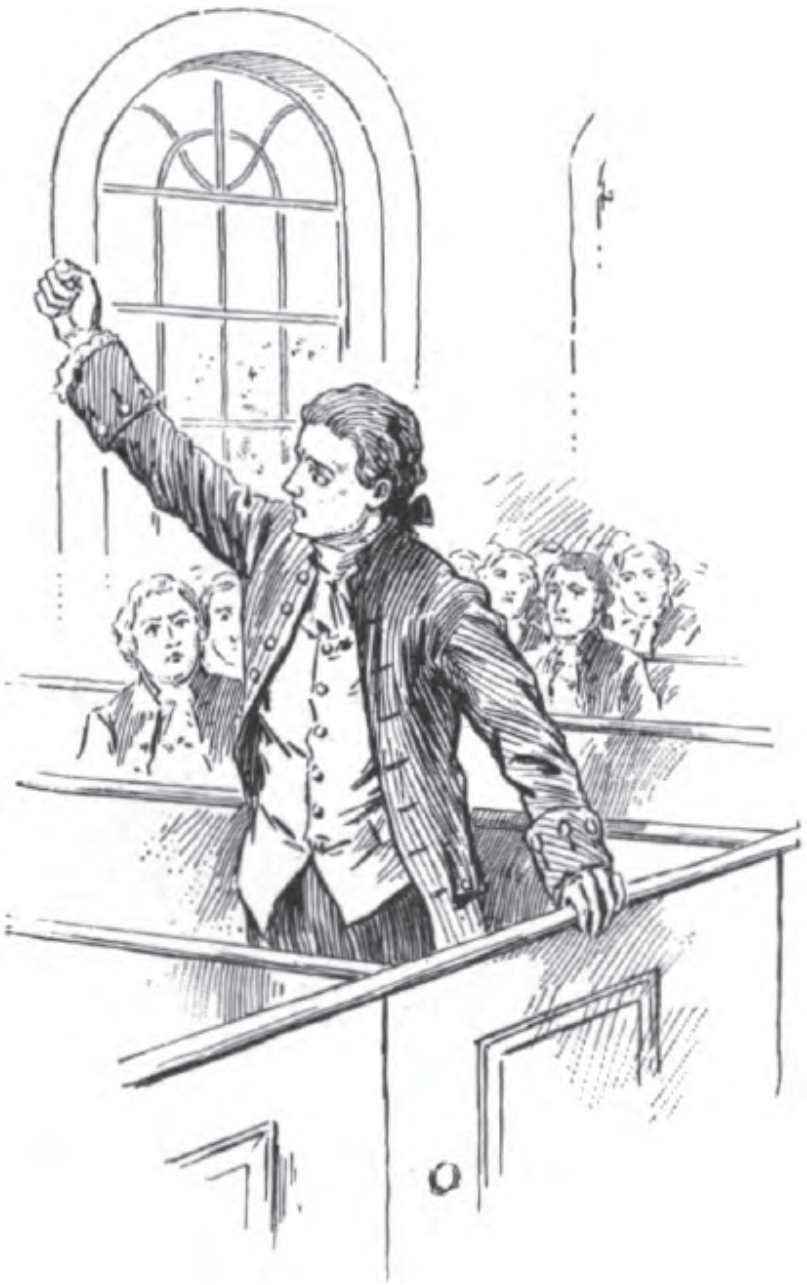
Patrick Henry



[The resolutions I wrote in May of 1765] formed the first opposition to the stamp act and the scheme of taxing America by the British parliament. All the colonies, either through fear or want[10] of opportunity to form an opposition, or from influence of some kind or other, had remained silent. I had been for the first time elected a burgess a few days before, was young, inexperienced, [and] unacquainted with the forms of the house and the members that composed it. Finding the men of weight averse to opposition, and the commencement of the tax at hand, and that no person was likely to step forth, I determined to venture, and alone, unadvised, and unassisted, on a blank leaf of an old law book, wrote:

Resolved, That the first adventurers and settlers of this his majesty's colony and dominion, brought with them and transmitted to their posterity . . . all the privileges, franchises, and immunities that have at any time been held, enjoyed, and possessed by the people of Great Britain.

Resolved, That by two royal charters, granted by king James the first, the colonists aforesaid are declared entitled to all the privileges,



Patrick Henry addresses the House of Burgesses

[10] **want** – lack

Colonial Cartoon

liberties, and immunities of denizens[11] and natural born subjects, to all intents and purposes, as if they had been abiding and born within the realm of England.

Resolved, That the taxation of the people by themselves, or by persons chosen by themselves to represent them (who can only know what taxes the people are able to bear and the easiest mode of raising them, and are equally affected by such taxes themselves), is the distinguishing characteristic of British freedom, and without which the ancient constitution cannot subsist.

Resolved, That his majesty's liege people of this most ancient colony have uninterruptedly enjoyed the right of being thus governed by their own assembly in the article of their taxes and internal police,[12] and that the same hath never been forfeited, or any other way given up, but hath been constantly recognized by the king and people of Great Britain.

Resolved, therefore, That the general assembly of this colony have the sole right and power to lay taxes and impositions upon the inhabitants of this colony: and that every attempt to vest such power in any person or persons whatsoever, other than the general assembly aforesaid, has a manifest tendency to destroy British as well as American freedom.

Patrick Henry continues:

Upon offering [these resolutions] to the house, violent debates ensued. Many threats were uttered, and much abuse cast on me by the party for submission. After a long and warm contest, the resolutions passed by a very small majority, perhaps of one or two only. The alarm spread throughout America with astonishing quickness, and the ministerial party were overwhelmed. The great point of resistance to British taxation was universally established in the colonies. . . . Whether this will prove a blessing or a curse will depend upon the use our people make of the blessings which a gracious God hath bestowed on us. If they are wise, they will be great and happy. If they are of a contrary character, they will be miserable. — Righteousness alone can exalt them as a nation.

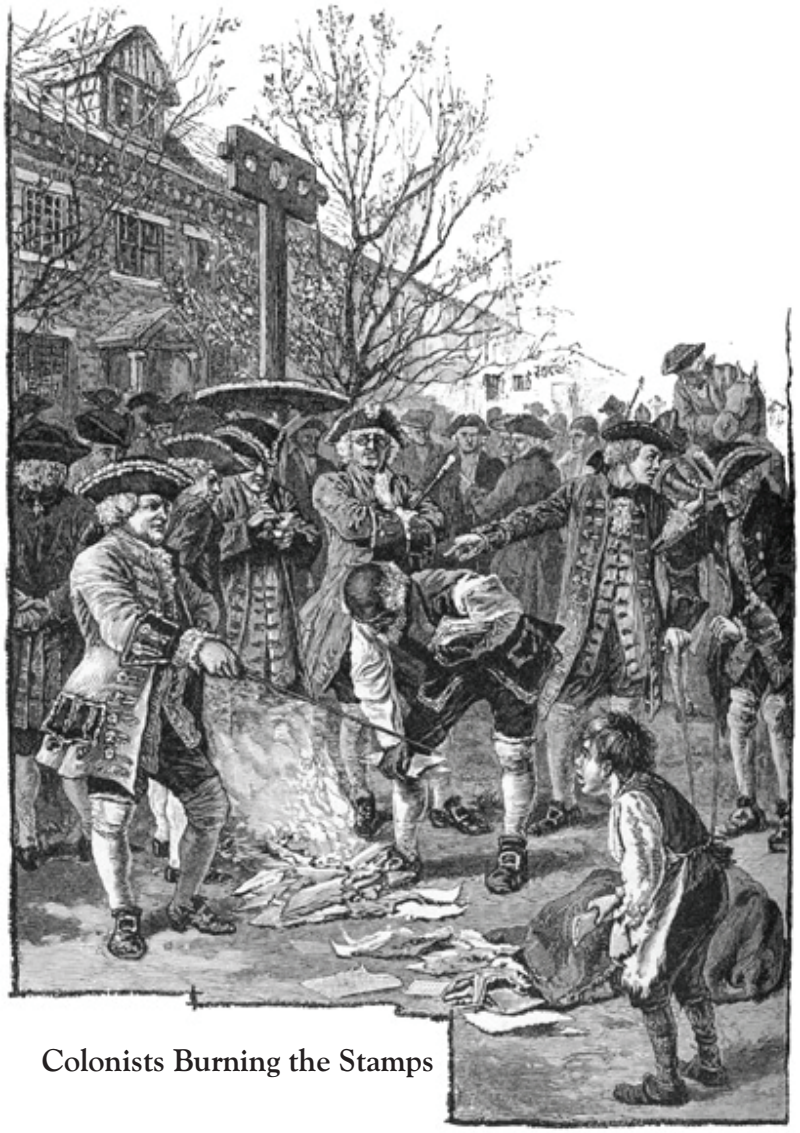
[11] **denizens** – citizens
[12] **police** – the government of a city or town

Reader, whoever thou art, remember this; and in thy sphere, practice virtue thyself, and encourage it in others. — P. Henry

"Righteousness exalteth a nation," quotes Patrick Henry (Proverbs 14:34). He was not alone in this conviction. John Adams—even as a young lad—understood well this Scripture. Writing in his journal in February of 1756 he (at just twenty years of age) acknowledged the only foundation upon which a wise and just nation could be built: the Word of God:

Suppose a nation in some distant region should take the Bible for their only law-book, and every member should regulate his conduct by the precepts there exhibited! Every member would be obliged, in conscience, to temperance and frugality and industry, to justice and kindness and charity towards his fellow men, and to piety, love, and reverence towards Almighty God.

In this commonwealth, no man would impair his health by gluttony, drunkenness, or lust; no man would sacrifice his most precious time to cards or any other trifling and mean amusement. No man would steal, or lie, or in any way defraud his neighbor, but would live in peace and goodwill with all men. No man would blaspheme his Maker or profane His worship, but a rational and manly, a sincere and unaffected piety and devotion would reign in all hearts. What a utopia—what a Paradise would this region be!



Colonists Burning the Stamps

A utopia indeed! With these words Adams echoed the sentiments of countless of his fellow-countrymen. What was the foundation of a just nation? What was the source of true freedom, or any freedom at all? These things were to be found in obedience to the God of the Scriptures alone. Was not this what birthed the freedom Adams and his contemporaries then enjoyed?

This was a question which was asked by many tongues in 1765: what was the origin of the freedom in America? How had such a nation been born from the tyranny of ancient Europe and Britain? What had caused the liberty which the American continent now enjoyed? To this question Adams gave the following answer:

As long as this [ancient tyranny] lasted and the people were held in ignorance, Liberty—and with her, Knowledge and Virtue, too—seem to have deserted the earth, and one age of darkness succeeded another, till God, in His benign[13] providence, raised up the champions who began and conducted the *Reformation*.

The preservation of the truths of the Reformation of the sixteenth century was what led the colonists to settle in America, as Adams notes:

We would observe that the great design of our ancestors in leaving the kingdom of England was to be freed from a subjection to its spiritual laws and courts, and to worship God according to the dictates of their consciences. . . . "to obtain for themselves and their posterity the liberty of worshipping God in such manner as appeared to them most agreeable to the sacred Scriptures."

The ancestors of the colonial Americans had come to this continent to enjoy this right of worshiping God according to the Sacred Scriptures and the liberty that always accompanied it, and the men of Adams' generation—the descendants of those who had fled British tyranny in their own day—were determined not to relinquish that liberty and right. Petition after petition was drawn up in British America and sent to England to request a repeal of the Stamp Act and a recognition of the rights of the colonists—as British subjects—to tax themselves.

[13] **benign** – gracious, favorable